

# Empower!

GIVING VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES A VOICE



A Publication of the Metropolitan Police Department's Victim Services Branch

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## Message from Tyria Fields



Tyria Fields

**T**he Victim Services Branch serves as a valuable tool for the Metropolitan Police Department offering quality engagement with victims of crime. Our networking capabilities through community

based outreaches and activities allow us to stay abreast of resources and services designed to enhance the quality of life for victims of crime in the District of Columbia. In 2014, members ensured services were welcoming, ac-

cessible, informative and relevant. Looking ahead to 2015, our services will continue to bridge gaps for victims of crime. Please stay connected to the Victim Services Branch, there is so much more to come.

*Tyria Fields*  
*Kayla Smith*  
*LaVara Hill*  
*Bephemah Woods*  
*Esther Urbino Thomas*  
*Carla J. O'Rand*

*Helen E. Hall*  
*Tramaine Newome*  
*[Signature]*  
*Megan Riley*  
*Markem Castro*

## Upcoming Events and Activities

### Ongoing

#### Survivors of Homicide Support Group Meeting

Last Thursday of every Month  
6:30-7:30 p.m.

Howard University Campus  
530 College St, NW  
For more information, contact Julia Dunkins 202-258-2564

### January 2015

January is **National Stalking Awareness Month (NSAM)**. During this 11th year of recognition, let's educate ourselves about the



prevalence of stalking and the resources that are available to help victims of stalking. For more information contact the 202-467-8700 or [www.victimsofcrime.org](http://www.victimsofcrime.org).

### April 2015

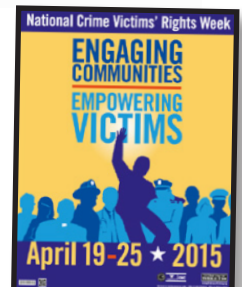
The Metropolitan Police Department will host **Next-of-Kin** meetings for unsolved homicide cases. For more information contact 202-645-6363 or [www.mpd.gov](http://www.mpd.gov).

### National Crime Victims' Rights Week

(NCVRW) is April 19-25, 2015 and the theme, **Engaging Communities Engaging Victims** is especially relevant at this time. Agencies and organiza-

tions supporting victims of crime will host a multitude of programs for the public for the purpose of enhancing relations.

For information on activities in your community contact 202-307-5983 or [www.ovc.gov](http://www.ovc.gov). Further, contact the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) at [www.mpd.gov](http://www.mpd.gov) or 202-724-4339 to learn about MPD's activities for NCVRW.



—Tyria Fields

Why violence is turned into humor. Why we victim blame.

Domestic Violence is a serious matter that costs the United States billions of dollars a year in workplace effectiveness, medical bills, and housing displacement. Yet, the issue of domestic violence becomes a topic for fodder and

humor in private discussions with friends and family. Activists this Halloween had to admonish costume designers for creating wear that resembled batterers and included a battered girlfriend doll. Social media took sides in laughing and criticizing people who

opted to don the costume. The initial humor and then backlash has to make people ponder. Why is the violent beating of someone funny? Anyone can be a victim of a crime. It impacts us all, and that's no laughing matter.

—Kayce Simmons

Reinvestigations: What Secondary Victims Can Expect of the Major Case Unit

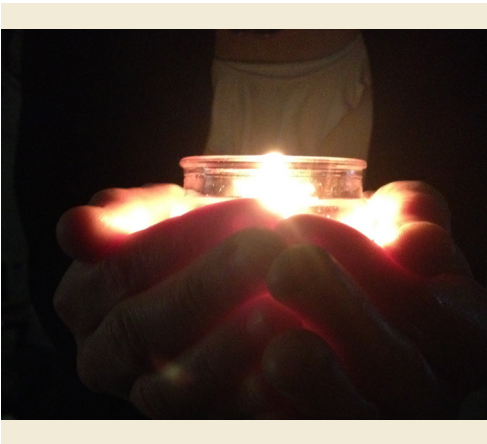
Losing a loved one to homicide may be one of the most traumatic experiences that an individual can face. The Major Case Victims Unit (MCVU) understands that reinvestigating an unsolved homicide (cold case) due to new obtained information can be stressful and frustrating. With those obstacles in mind, the MCVU is dedicated to empowering and ensuring that all secondary victims are provided with information about the way the criminal justice system works, what rights and provisions are legislated for secondary victims, ensuring that open-communication between detectives and the secondary victims continues, and providing on-going emotional support.

Throughout the reinvestigation there may be difficult times that could affect you but acknowledging these emotions is a critical to seeking and receiving support. It is our aim to work effortlessly to be attentive and responsive to all secondary victims' needs.

If you would like to obtain further information or to request services please contact the Victim Services Branch (202)724-4339. Anyone with information concerning any of the Unsolved Cases is asked

to call MPD Law Enforcement Unsolved Cases Major (2746) or send information to [unsolved.murder@dc.gov](mailto:unsolved.murder@dc.gov). Anonymous information may also be forwarded to the department's TEXT TIP LINE by text messaging 50411.

—Dawn Christie



Stalking Victimization

Stalking is unwanted or obsessive attention by a person or group toward another person. Following you and showing up wherever you are, monitoring you phone calls or computer use, to using GPS to track where you go are some examples of stalking behaviors. Stalkers can be someone you know or a stranger. Statistics show that 3 in 4 stalking victims are stalked by someone they know. 66% of female victims and 41% of male victims of stalking victims are stalked

by a current or former intimate partner. 10% of stalking victims are stalked by a stranger (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011). If you are a victim of stalking you may feel unsafe, fear to leave your home, or frustrated that others don't understand why you are scared. Stalking is a violent and serious crime that should be reported to the police to get help. Stalking can lead to serious crimes such as assaults, kidnapping, and even

homicide. Here at the Metropolitan Police Department Victim Services Branch, we empower all victims of crime to report the incident and encourage participation in the criminal proceedings in their case. The Victim Specialists are here to refer you to supportive resources if you have ever or know someone who has been a victim of stalking. There is help for you, you have victim rights, and always remember that you are not to blame for a stalker's behavior.

— Tramaine Newsome, M.A.C.J., C.A.

Annual Tree of Remembrance Event Continues to Assuage Loved Ones at Holidays

The holiday season can be especially difficult for families of homicides; they may experience overwhelming feelings of grief, loss and anguish. Since 2008, the Metropolitan Police Department has hosted our

annual Tree of Remembrance program. During the event families are given a personalized ornament to place on the tree in remembrance of their loved ones. This year's theme is "Peace."



The Metropolitan Police Department's Family extends a hope of peace to the families who have lost loved ones to homicide in the District of Columbia.

—Carla Okonkwo

Tips for Keeping Yourself, Your Family Safe from Impaired Driving

December was declared National Impaired Driving Prevention Month by President Obama in 2010 primarily because the holiday season puts drivers fueled by alcohol and/or drugs behind the wheel in greater numbers than at other times of the year. Whether the substance abuse is all dressed up in festive party clothes or cloaked in a sense of seasonal sadness and loss, alcohol and drugs are plentiful this time of year and find themselves on the roads.

The goal of National Impaired Driving Prevention Month is to raise awareness of the fatal consequences of driv-

ing under the influence. Thousands die on our nation's roads each year because of drunk/drugged driving. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that every day, almost 30 people die in the United States die in motor vehicle crashes that involve an alcohol-impaired driver. Drugs other than alcohol, i.e., marijuana and cocaine) are involved in about 18% of motor vehicle deaths. These other drugs are often used in combination with alcohol. With the holiday pressure to be happy, or medicate the fact that we're not happy, drunk/drugged driving crashes are most prevalent at this time

of year. Even if you're sober yourself, the roads are filled with others who are driving while impaired.

Therefore, please consider the following for year round safe driving:

- » Designate a sober driver before celebrations begin.
- » Don't let your friends drive impaired. Take their keys away.
- » If you have been driving or using drugs, get a ride home or call a taxi.
- » Never serve alcohol to those under the age of 21.
- » Have a plan to get anyone who is under the influence home safely.

—Beyshinah Woods, LGSW, CA

How May We Assist You?

**Victim Services Branch**  
Tyria Fields ..... Manager.....724-4339 ..... [tyria.fields@dc.gov](mailto:tyria.fields@dc.gov)

The Family Liaison Specialists Unit (FLSU) provides support services to homicide victims and survivors throughout the investigative process.

**Family Liaison Specialists Unit**  
Carla Okonkwo ..... Supervisor.....645-9629 ..... [carla.okonkwo@dc.gov](mailto:carla.okonkwo@dc.gov)  
Marlene Castro ..... Family Liaison Specialist .....645-9631 ..... [marlene.castro@dc.gov](mailto:marlene.castro@dc.gov)  
Megan Riley ..... Family Liaison Specialist .....645-5537 ..... [megan.riley@dc.gov](mailto:megan.riley@dc.gov)

The Victim Specialists Unit (VSU) provides support, information, and referrals to victims and survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault.

**Victim Specialists Unit**  
Helen Hall ..... Victim Specialist.....727-6007 ..... [helen.hall@dc.gov](mailto:helen.hall@dc.gov)  
Kayce Simmons ..... Victim Specialist.....724-2215 ..... [kayce.simmons@dc.gov](mailto:kayce.simmons@dc.gov)  
Esther U. Thomas ..... Victim Specialist.....727-6006 ..... [estheru.thomas@dc.gov](mailto:estheru.thomas@dc.gov)  
Tramaine Newsome ..... Victim Specialist.....724-2215 ..... [tramaine.newsome@dc.gov](mailto:tramaine.newsome@dc.gov)  
Beyshinah Woods ..... Victim Specialist.....727-6007 ..... [beyshinah.woods@dc.gov](mailto:beyshinah.woods@dc.gov)

The Major Case Victims Unit (MCVU) provides supportive services to secondary victims of unsolved homicides. Additionally, this unit offers victim services and assistance to victims of violent assaults in the District of Columbia.

**Major Case Victims Unit**  
Dawn M. Christie ..... Victim Specialist.....727-7139 ..... [dawnm.christie@dc.gov](mailto:dawnm.christie@dc.gov)  
Laverne Harley ..... Victim Specialist.....727-5391 ..... [laverne.harley@dc.gov](mailto:laverne.harley@dc.gov)

## Letters & Kudos

### Share your story

Send a letter detailing your experiences — positive or negative — to [victim.services@dc.gov](mailto:victim.services@dc.gov) or send via US Mail to:

Family Liaison Specialists Unit  
101 M Street SW, WDC 20024

Hello Carla,  
My mother Mrs. Eva Bell (who died on December 1, 2014) truly looked forward to attending the Annual Tree of Remembrance sponsored by the Victims Services Branch of the Metropolitan Police Department. It meant so much to her to know that each year my Dad, the late Joseph W. Bell, Jr. would be included in your special celebration, and she loved receiving the ornaments. Mom attended each year with the exception of this year because of health issues, but it warmed her heart and comforted her. Now that she's gone, I will try to continue her tradition because I know how much it meant to her. Thank you for making a very difficult season a little easier to bear.

—Y.B.H.

### Thank You from Howard University

On behalf of the Howard University Department of Public Safety, I would

like to sincerely thank you for your participation in our annual Safety Fair. Your

contribution played a vital role in this being one of our most successful safety fairs.

Please accept our heartfelt thanks to you and your agency for your continuous support in helping us to increase safety and security awareness on campus. We look forward to working with you again and if the Howard University Department of Public Safety can ever be of assistance to you, please don't hesitate to call on us. Thanks again for all your help!

—Brian K. Jordan  
Chief of Police  
Howard University



Metropolitan Police Department  
Victim Services Branch/Family Liaison Specialists Unit  
101 M Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20024

